BRITISH COLUMBIA
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NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Attorney General
and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism
Ministry of Education

YOUTH MAKE A CASE AGAINST RACISM

VICTORIA – British Columbia is embarking on an exciting new initiative to encourage grade 4 to 7 students to take personal responsibility for preventing racism, while celebrating the province's cultural diversity through music and art, Attorney General and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism Wally Oppal and Education Minister and Deputy Premier Shirley Bond announced today.

Make A Case Against Racism marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racism March 21 by using a proactive approach to examining discrimination. It encourages young people to take action, within their schools and lives, to help prevent racism by being aware of and responding respectfully to people from other cultures.

"Building and maintaining inter-cultural harmony is a responsibility shared by all British Columbians," said Oppal. "We are asking teachers and students to recognize the importance of fair and respectful treatment for all by joining in this new initiative to design and produce a CD against racism."

Make A Case Against Racism is a joint initiative of the ministries of Attorney General, Education and Public Safety and Solicitor General. It is designed to complement provincial school curriculum.

"Our schools are an important source of interaction for young people and adults of diverse backgrounds and cultures," said Bond. "By helping children and youth find effective tools and strategies to address racism, we can create welcoming and inclusive communities where everyone can feel safe and achieve their best."

Schools throughout B.C. with grade four to seven students, including independent and First Nations schools, are receiving innovative Make A Case Against Racism poster-brochures and Youth Against Violence wallet cards. The materials will support classroom discussions and learning activities that can be downloaded at: www.WelcomeBC.ca.

The centrepiece of the program is a music and artwork contest, which culminates in the production of a CD that will be distributed free to the first 1,000 artwork contest entrants. Through an arrangement with Music BC Industry Association, the CD will feature music by B.C. musicians, selected by students through online voting (to vote, go to: www.musicbc.org/mar). The CD's insert will display the winning anti-racism artwork, chosen by a jury of young people. The contest closes April 30.

"Make A Case Against Racism will not only illustrate the creativity of our youth, but will help to bring awareness to the problem of racism," said Bob D'Eith, executive director of the Music BC Industry Association. "Students will be exposed to music they might not normally come in contact with, which, in turn, will help them gain an appreciation for the multicultural nature of our Canadian society."

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Make A Case Against Racism is supported under WelcomeBC, a provincial initiative announced by Premier Gordon Campbell June 13, 2007. Funding for this initiative is provided in large part by the Government of Canada through the Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration. WelcomeBC helps immigrants moving to B.C. access existing and expanded services under one umbrella, to assist them in better adapting to life in their new communities.

Make A Case Against Racism resources can be accessed by visiting: www.WelcomeBC.ca.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUNDER

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WELCOMEBC ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS/INITIATIVES

Make A Case Against Racism
Make A Case Against Racism engages teachers and students in grades 4 to 7 in all public, independent and First Nations schools in addressing racism. Resources include a poster-brochure for youth and a resource guide for teachers. A music and artwork activity permits students to access the Music BC website to vote for their favourite songs, meant to reflect cultures, world music genres and/or anti-racism messages, by B.C. musicians. Students may also submit CD cover designs with an anti-racism message to a provincewide contest. The activity culminates in production of a CD of the top-rated songs, with the winning student artwork featured in the CD insert. For information, check the website at www.WelcomeBC.ca.

B.C. Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Program (BCAMP)
BCAMP provides annual funding for organizations and individuals for projects that promote anti-racism and multiculturalism. The allocation for 2008/2009 is $450,000. For 2008/09, $200,000 of this has been committed to youth engagement initiatives.

Critical Incident Response Model (CIRM)
WelcomeBC supports communities to address racism and hate activity through the critical incident response model (CIRM). To date, 27 communities are engaged in the three-step, three-year process model, the first of its kind in Canada. It includes community training, critical incident monitoring, liaison with the B.C. Hate Crime Team and leadership to develop response protocols at the community, regional and provincial levels.

B.C. Hate Crime Team
Co-ordinated by the ministries of Public Safety and Solicitor General and Attorney General, the B.C. Hate Crime Team is the only program of its kind in Canada. It involves Crown counsel, government ministries, municipal police and the RCMP in combining expertise to combat hate crime. The team supports police investigations by connecting with communities where hate crimes have occurred to help them understand and mitigate these incidents. Members conduct anti-racism training with law enforcement personnel, including over 4,000 police officers, plus corrections, defence, customs and probation staff.

The team is also a central repository on hate and bias crimes for provincial, national and international law enforcement agencies. Through links throughout North America, the United Kingdom and other countries, the team investigates and tracks hate crimes on the Internet. In 2002, the team obtained the first conviction in Canada for hate propaganda on the Internet.

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Community Bridging Services
Community bridging services match immigrant youth and adult newcomers with other youth and adults in schools and communities to help them feel welcomed, assist with their settlement process and promote friendship among different cultures. With support from the Government of Canada through the Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration, funding includes $2.5 million annually for adult services and $1 million for youth.

Safe Harbour Program
Co-ordinated by the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA), the Safe Harbour Program addresses racism and discrimination by designating businesses and organizations as safe places where people being subjected to hate crimes or racism can seek assistance. B.C. has 275 safe harbour locations in 17 communities. The network is expanding, to continue building welcoming communities and to encourage the reporting of incidents spurred by hate or bias.

Dialogue on Multiculturalism
During 2007 and 2008, Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Powell River, Smithers, Williams Lake, Fernie, Terrace, Duncan, Vanderhoof, Campbell River and Vernon sponsored dialogues on multiculturalism to explore ways communities and neighbourhoods could become more welcoming and inclusive for newcomers and long-time Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents.

BC150 Mosaic Grants: Honouring B.C.'s Diverse Cultures
In December 2007, the BC150 Secretariat of the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts and the settlement and multiculturalism division of the Ministry of Attorney General announced the BC150 Mosaic Grants. The one-time grants will honour the diverse cultures that have shaped this province by recognizing contributions made by Aboriginal, pioneer and immigrant communities throughout B.C. Grant recipients will be announced this spring.

Provincial Nesika Awards Program
The provincial Nesika Awards, launched Feb. 11, recognize the contributions of people, organizations and communities who have done outstanding work in bringing British Columbia's diverse cultures together. Nominations, which close Sept. 15, are being sought for individuals, organizations or communities. Details are located at www.WelcomeBC.ca.

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